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TAROT FUNDAMENTALS

LESSON NO. 10

BUILDERS OF THE ADYTUM

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Lesson Ten

THE EMPRESS

The noun "empress" comes from a Latin root meaning "to set in order, to arrange". This, you will see, is in agreement with some of the meanings of the number 3 given in the preceding lesson. In Tarot, the Empress represents the inner side of the process which establishes order, and the Key following it in the series has to do with the outer side of the same process.

By contrast with the High Priestess, who is a cold, virgin figure corresponding to the moon, the Empress is warm and maternal. She is the Great Mother, pregnant with the world of form. In this figure all the mother goddesses of the ancient world are synthesized, but she is particularly Aphrodite, or Venus.

Venus is also the astrological attribution of the letter Daleth, according to the school of Qabalists represented in these pages. Here two points of occult teaching may be of interest. According to H. P. Blavatsky's SECRET DOCTRINE, the human race owes much to an earlier development of consciousness connected with the planet Venus. Again, in the Rosicrucian FAMA FRATERNITATIS, the entrance to the mysterious vault which contained all the secrets of the order, as well as the perfectly preserved body of its Founder, was discovered when one of the Brothers happened to remove a tablet of brass, a metal associated with the planet Venus.

Furthermore, the vault itself had seven sides, and this heptagonal construction is found also in many alchemical diagrams typifying the perfection of the Great Work. Such perfection is, of course, a victory over all obstacles, and this idea of victory, linked with the number 7, is associated with Venus because Qabalists call the seventh Sephirah the Sphere of Venus.

Put very simply, one meaning of all these mysterious hints is that the mental activities personified by the various mother deities, of whom Venus is a type, are those which lead to completion of the Great Work. Hence in the Qabalistic BOOK OF FORMATION, we find the idea of Wisdom associated with Daleth.

The same book also attributes Folly to this letter. This is because the same activities, which, rightly understood and applied, lead to the discovery of the Great Secret, and enable us to complete the Great Work, are those which drive millions of men and women into all sorts of foolish thought and action.

Tarot shows the positive, constructive aspects of the activity symbolized by the Great Mother. The negative, destructive activities are not represented. To picture them would be to synthesize all the Furies into one horrible figure, and even then the picture would fall short of representing adequately the menace of perverted and distorted mental imagery.

Remember, subconsciousness accepts as true, and proceeds to develop by deduction, whatever suggestions are impressed on it by the habitual mental attitudes of self-consciousness. Subconsciousness is particularly susceptible to the words we use as predicates after the initial statement "I AM".

A really practical occultist is careful to watch his words. He sees to it that he utters no statement he is unwilling to have realized in his external circumstances. Not even in jest will he say anything which belittles the "I AM". Early in his instruction he learns that the "I AM" is, in very truth, a magic "word of power". This is the **Lost Word** of which so much has been said and written—lost because the profane world has forgotten its significance and its actual power. Yet the Lost Word is found, in every generation of mankind, by those who ripen into understanding.

The Empress, then, is Mother Nature personified as Venus. She clothes herself in the web of manifestation which entangles the minds of fools; but the wise see through appearances, and to them Nature unveils herself. The veil hiding truth is the veil of human ignorance. It may be taken away by those who know how to choose their mental images.

Green is the color associated with Daleth. It predominates in Key 3, as it does in nature. Note that green is produced by mixing yellow and blue, the colors associated with the Magician and the High Priestess.

The Empress is a matronly figure and traditional interpretations tell us she is pregnant. This agrees with the fact that creative imagination results from the impregnation of subconsciousness by impulses originating in self-consciousness.

Her hair is yellow, like that of the Fool, to symbolize radiant energy. The wreath binding it is of myrtle, a plant sacred to Venus. Myrtle is an evergreen shrub. Like the acacia, it is a symbol of immortality.

On the Empress' head is a crown of twelve golden, six-pointed stars. This connects her with the woman in the Apocalypse, clothed with the sun and crowned with twelve stars. Like that woman, the Empress has the moon under her feet to show that the basis of her activity is the power symbolized by the High Priestess.

The six-pointed stars represent universal forces. Thus the symbolism of the crown refers to the twelve modes of cosmic activity associated with the twelve signs of the zodiac. One idea conveyed by this detail of the symbolism is that subconsciousness, though it is influenced by

suggestions originating in self-consciousness, is open also to an influx of power which descends from the celestial, or superconscious, level of the Life-power's activity.

The Empress' green robe is bound by a golden girdle above which there is shown a red triangle. By its shape, the triangle is a Greek letter Delta corresponding to Daleth. It is red to show that the influence of the universal fiery energy operates through the activities of subconsciousness.

The Empress carries a scepter surmounted by a globe bearing a cross. This is a symbol of dominion. Older symbolism is that the globe and the cross form a union of feminine and masculine, or positive and negative.

The shield is copper, the metal sacred to Venus. The dove on its face, also sacred to Venus, is the Christian symbol of the Holy Spirit. Hence the dove is connected with the esoteric meanings of the number 3.

In THE HARMONIES OF BEING, P. F. G. Lacuria writes:

"The number three reveals to us the harmony of the Holy Spirit. The number three is the return to unity, which seems to be broken by the number two. It is in uniting the Father and the Son that the Holy Spirit realizes itself; and on this account it may be considered as the efflorescence of the unity."

Do not let the theological terms in this quotation blind you to its profound occult meaning. Lacuria wrote in a day when it was advisable to **sound** strictly orthodox, but he had esoteric associations with the same Order from which B.O.T.A. derives both its knowledge and its authority for continuing the practical work of applying that knowledge.

Besides emphasizing the correspondence of the Empress to the woman in the Apocalypse, and indicating that the basis of her power is what Tarot symbolizes by the High Priestess, the moon under her feet reminds us that all activities having to do with growth, development, reproduction and imagination are those in which the principle of rhythm operates.

The stone seat is richly ornamented in contrast to the severe simplicity of the cube on which sits the High Priestess. This shows the result of the operation of self-conscious observation and induction upon subconsciousness. It results in modifications and adaptations of nature and the arts.

The ripened wheat in the foreground represents the completion of a cycle of growth. It carries with it the same idea of multiplication that is indicated by the number 3. The **seed forms** are multiplied. Every act of creative imagination elaborates conditions spontaneously provided by nature into new forms which, in turn, give rise to future growth.

The stream and pool in the background represent the stream of consciousness which has its source in the robe of the High Priestess.

The symbol of water falling into a pool is also an intimation of the Law of Gender, of the reciprocal relationship between the male and female modes of conscious energy. This stream is a symbol of what is known in analytical psychology as **libido**, the driving energy of conscious life. The stream is modified and directed by the self-conscious activities symbolized by the Magician, and the pool stands for the accumulation of these influences at the subconscious level. The stream waters the garden and makes it fertile.

The cypress trees in the background are ten in number corresponding to the ten circles on the Fool's outer garment. The cypress is a tree sacred to Venus. Attributed to the same goddess are red roses, of which there are five, representing the five senses, and having the same meaning as the five roses in the Magician's garden.

Yet another Venusian symbol is the necklace of pearls. Seven pearls are visible representing the seven heavenly bodies known to the ancients. They correspond also to seven interior stars, the nerve centers in the human body, called **chakras** by Hindu yogis.

When these beads are strung in a necklace, they are related together and put in order. Furthermore, a necklace like this touches the throat at the level of the Venus center which is located at this point. The intimation is that the Venus center is the one through which the seven interior stars are to be brought into orderly correlation so that the forces playing through them may be controlled. This correlation may be called the secret entrance into adeptship, and thus the Venus center may be thought of as the **door** to mastery.

CREATIVE IMAGINATION

In your study period ponder this: **The point where the working power of subconsciousness may be controlled is the point where thoughts take definite form as mental images.**

A statement like "All is good" is not a definite mental image. Statements of truth do not work unless they are linked to specific imagery. The images must be concrete. They must prepare mind and body for action. This is in no sense a denial of the value of abstract statements of principle as helps to right understanding. The point is that intellectual statements of truth must be supplemented by concrete imagery before the mighty forces of the inner life can emerge as actual forms and conditions of the physical plane.

To become a practical occultist, man must use aright the four magical implements on the Magician's table. The wand symbolizes will; the cup, imagination; the sword, action; the pentacle refers to physical embodiment.

The garden of the Empress symbolizes universal subconsciousness. It is that department of intelligence below human awareness. In the realm of nature, it is that part of consciousness which has to do with incubation and growth. It is the intelligence which grows a rose on a rosebush, never on a thistle stalk.

There is much confusion as to the terms superconsciousness, self-consciousness and subconsciousness. Perhaps a homely example will clarify for you the whole matter of consciousness. Consider that you are making an inspection tour of a big factory. Inside the factory building you see several doors, marked "Private". Other lettering on the portals indicates that they lead to executive offices. Full knowledge of factory operation rests with the officers, and their characters are reflected in the output of the plant. This department may be likened to superconsciousness.

You now enter the pattern-making department, where mental images, previously blue-printed, are given concrete form as models. This department corresponds to self-consciousness.

Then, as you enter the foundry department, you are almost bowled over by a blare of noise. Here you see the toilers pouring molten metal into molds. Complicated automatic machinery performs marvels of specialized activity. Here the product conceived in a general way by the executives, and more definitely outlined in the pattern department, is built into solid forms. This department may be likened to the province of subconsciousness.

You realize at once that all three departments must work together in perfect accord to produce the finished product. One department cannot do the work of another. Each contributes. Each specializes.

In the garden of the Empress the soil is prepared and highly enriched to grow whatever seed is planted by the Magician. You select the seed at the self-conscious level and it behooves you to select it with care. Do not plant tares. (See Lesson 2, SEVEN STEPS. Remember that the material given in those seven lessons is not to be read and set aside. It is alive with vital information which, if put into practice with persistence, will make you the kind of human being you want to be, and put you doing, in outstanding fashion, the thing you desire as your next step. So refer often to those lessons.)

The occult law is that whatever is held unwaveringly in consciousness tends to manifest in body and affairs. It is practical. It is natural. You hold up a pattern for the Life-power to flow into and congeal into solid form. (See SEVENS STEPS, Lesson 4.)

Moreover, the Ancient Wise Ones set forth a law, restated in SEVEN STEPS, that subconsciousness is always amenable to control by suggestion. Thus we know that the best way to manage subconsciousness is by giving it hints. It is, you see, especially susceptible to indirection. The Wise Ones also discovered long ago that subconsciousness is most powerfully impressed by mental imagery. (Review SEVEN STEPS, Lesson 7.) It is not

enough to create a fleeting, muddled, mental image. The **habitual** image is the one acted upon by the power of development and growth inherent in subconsciousness. The **predominant mental attitude** is the pattern which is filled with plastic substance which congeals into physical things and conditions.

Subconsciousness is the garden wherein the seeds of mental imagery incubate and grow. You are not conscious of the **process,** nor are you able to see its manifold operations. You know, however, that the seed of your image sprouts and grows according to the surge of cosmic energy and in harmony with natural law. Your part is to plant pure seed by right selection of images.

In your mind pictures, be specific and work in a lot of detail. Always see the desired vision as a present reality. See colors. Hear sounds. Smell odors. Note movements. If you are in the picture, get into action yourself. (See SEVEN STEPS, Lesson 5.) Do this, and we assure you that the seed you plant with your imagery will sprout in the warm and fertile soil of subconsciousness. The wheat of your image will leap up into the sunlight and rear golden heads of fulfilled desire.

This symbol of wheat in the Empress' garden is most significant. It tells of reproduction and multiplication—two great powers of subconsciousness. The wheat symbol stresses the truth that it is now edible grain because what was once only simple grass was seen mentally as something better, and was cultivated to make that vision come true. Life is capable of vast development, and this development comes about through the use of mental imagery—seed planted in subconsciousness.

You can partake of this vision and the attendant development. When you image constructively you begin to administer cosmic law to assist in evolution. You exercise your truly divine power of rulership.